

THE ZOOLOGIST

No. 802.—April, 1908.

ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT FOR NORFOLK (1907).

By J. H. GURNEY, F.Z.S.

(PLATE I.)

THE year 1907 has added the Desert Wheatear to the Norfolk list, and also, through the discrimination of Mr. F. Coburn, the Black Brent, though the latter had really been obtained once before in Norfolk, bringing up our list to three hundred and seventeen; but what attracted most attention were the luminous Barn-Owls, which, received at first with incredulity, were soon proved to be an attested reality, and they are flying about in the county still. That luminous Barn-Owls have been seen before in the same part of Norfolk is certain, and therefore there need not have been so much scepticism about them. We have it on the best authority—namely, from the man himself—that some years ago Frederick Rolfe, a gamekeeper now retired, saw what could have been nothing else when stopping Fox-earths at West Bilney. A few nights afterwards he saw the same shining bird again, subsequently shot it, and found that it was a Barn-Owl. He has a perfect recollection of all the circumstances, and describes the Owl as emitting a very bright light when near him, and that it even continued to give out a slight glow for some hours after it was dead. Other stories are also told of moving lights at night, now believed to have been birds, and there can be little

doubt that they were Barn-Owls, though that was not suspected at the time. As long ago as 1866 Mr. J. A. Harvie-Brown met with an instance of it in the Barn-Owl in Cambridgeshire, which was never recorded, and other cases might be cited which for various reasons did not find their way into print.

With regard to what causes the luminosity, the general idea in Norfolk is to ascribe it to the luminous touchwood which is occasionally to be seen in trees, more particularly in the ash. At a meeting of the Norwich Naturalists' Society, when the luminosity of Owls was made the subject of discussion, Mr. S. H. Long stated that this luminous touchwood was due to the presence of certain mycelium forming Fungi, which is also what Mr. M. C. Cooke says. In his 'Introduction to the Study of Fungi,' p. 89, Mr. M. C. Cooke says:—"Several Agarics have this property, of which the largest number for any locality have been met with in Australia. All of them are species found growing upon dead wood, and all have white spores. Nearly the same story is related of all of them—to the effect that they emit a light sufficiently powerful to enable the time on a watch to be seen by it." In this way bacteria may have been imparted to the feathers of the Owls by contact, supposing that they inhabited a luminous hollow in some tree.

Another theory has been put forward by Mr. W. P. Pycraft, viz. that this luminosity may possibly be really due to some species of feather fungus new to science, for, he adds, it is known that feather fungi do exist, and he cites the case of a Goose thus affected. It would be a great pity to shoot these Owls, I think, but if their lair could be discovered we should at any rate see if it was a luminous hole, which would advance us one step in the inquiry.

The Vernal and Autumnal Migrations.—Nothing uncommon characterized the vernal migration, except it be worth mentioning that there was rather a late passage of Fieldfares. The Sociable Plovers and other rare birds which showed themselves in the county of Kent sent no contingent, as far as we know, to Norfolk or Suffolk. Neither was the autumnal migration marked by the rushes which sometimes characterize that season of the year. Except for an inrush of Rooks on the Suffolk coast on Oct. 26th, there were no real congregations of *Corvidæ* seen, and nothing



stamps the character of October and November more than the arrival of the *Corvidæ* on the East Coast. It is evident from the observations of Mr. Boyes, of Beverley, that the bulk of the Fieldfares, Redwings, Blackbirds, Bramblings, Tree-Sparrows, &c., made land further north.* There certainly was a passage of small birds of considerable strength registered by that experienced observer Mr. H. N. Pashley on the night of Oct. 9th—fully accounted for by the south-east gale—but this movement did not synchronise with the great flight in the North of Denmark on the 11th.

As usual, my best thanks are due to many correspondents for their co-operation, without which this Annual Report could hardly be carried on, and especially to the Rev. M. C. Bird, of Brunstead, and Mr. H. N. Pashley.

The rainfall for the year was 25·13 in.

JANUARY.

1st.—When last year's Report left off, the cold weather, which for a period had been almost Siberian in its intensity, was beginning to break up. Nevertheless, the unfortunate Coots, whose sufferings were described in your pages last year (Zool. 1907, pp. 85, 138), continued to have a bad time of it on our great tidal Broad at Breydon. Nor were they much better off on the fresh-water Broads now frozen over, and the Rev. M. C. Bird writes of a good many being skated down on the ice at Hickling, one man getting thirty as his share.

2nd.—A Goosander at Eye, and on the 4th Mr. W. Lowne received one from Buckenham, and another from Somerleyton; on the 6th there was one at Hickling Broad (Rev. M. C. Bird), and the next day Mr. Lowne had as many as four from Brundall, shot on the Yare; and about the same time one or two were reported to Mr. H. N. Pashley. Some of the above were good males, I believe. At the same time several Goosanders visited Yorkshire.

15th.—The Wash "deeps" and their attendant shoals have always been a resort of Brent Geese, though not so abundant on any part of our coast as formerly. On the 15th, I learn from Mr. F. Coburn, of Birmingham, that an example of the Pacific

* See the 'Field,' Nov. 17th, 1907.

Brent—or Black Brent, as it is termed in American works (*Bernicla nigricans*)—was shot by a wildfowler named Richardson, who devotes his attentions especially to these fowl. Mr. Coburn, who has paid particular attention to Geese, after observing that the present example is an adult female, and that an adult male of the same species (*B. nigricans*) had also been shot by the same wildfowler on Feb. 14th, 1902, near Lynn, continues:—"On the Pacific side of America they never see anything but the black race of the Brent Goose, and its plumage is always of the same brownish black colour on the under parts both summer and winter. . . . In addition to the larger amount and different distribution of white on the neck, I have found another character which is constant; this is that the central under tail-coverts project considerably over the end of the tail—in some cases nearly one inch—so that when the tail is closed the end appears to be white instead of black." This feature of the tail-coverts is well shown in the photograph which Mr. Coburn has obliged me with, taken from the Lynn bird of 1902, which is rather a better example than the one sent him in 1907, and it also shows the white neck marks almost meeting in front—a very important character. The validity of *Bernicla nigricans*, which has also been recently admitted into the Italian avifauna (Atti Soc. It. Sc. Nat. xlv.), is now fully recognized. Mr. Coburn observes that it must not be confused with the dark-bellied examples of *B. brenta* which have been obtained in Norfolk on different occasions, and which are considered by Mr. Coburn to be all males, a sexual difference which my limited observations confirm. Dresser, who gives specific rank to *B. nigricans* in his 'Manual of Palearctic Birds,' defines its habitat as Western North America, from the high north in summer to Lower California in winter, and east coasts of Asia from Kamchatka to Japan.

21st.—Sheld-Duck seen at Fritton by Mr. Buxton; very unusual on that lake.

27th.—More snow and hard frost; thermometer down to ten degrees. Two Smews on Breydon yesterday (B. Dye).

29th.—A drake Shoveler seen on the river at Eaton by Mr. Knight, its presence no doubt due to the return of the frost. A number of Tufted Ducks on the river and meadows at Postwick,

several of which† were shot. Subsequently Mr. Barclay and myself saw about a hundred Tufted Ducks† on Hoveton Broad, where on that wide sheet of water they were safe.

30th.—A Smew on Breydon Broad (A. Patterson), and shortly afterwards one on Hickling (M. C. Bird).

31st.—A Great Crested Grebe on the River Yare, at Eaton—not shot at, I am glad to say (R. Moore); I never heard of one there before.

FEBRUARY.

3rd.—A luminous Barn-Owl, emitting such brilliancy as to resemble a distant carriage-lamp, was seen at Twyford by Mr. R. J. Purdy and other persons. It was, however, not until December that the existence of a pair of these luminous birds attracted general notice, attention being first directed to this phenomenon by Sir T. Digby Pigott in 'The Times.'

MARCH.

20th.—A Black Redstart caught by Mr. Wyrley Birch in a glass porch at West Bilney Lodge, into which it may have been tempted to enter in search of flies.

21st.—A Red-legged Partridge picked up by George Jary, watcher to the Bird Protection Society, in Breydon Channel, after a gale from N.W., and a few days afterwards another caught in the heart of Yarmouth (Patterson), a repetition of what happened in April, 1905.

28th.—An early Coot's nest with five eggs (Bird).

APRIL.

14th.—Thirteen Little Grebes counted by Mr. L. C. Farman at Haddiscoe, where they breed—perhaps a company just arrived. It is a bird of double passage, but it is not likely that those which breed with us are the same individuals which we have on our streams in winter. Rose Pastor at Toftrees (D. U.).

21st.—S.W. The 21st saw the annual return of the Spoon-bill to Breydon Broad, where it was carefully watched by G. Jary until the 24th, when it departed. Last year it was first seen on the 28th. It is generally in the latter part of the month that the watcher expects to see it.

28th.—Mr. Farman saw a pair of Garganey Teal on the Waveney—summer migrants, probably just arrived.

MAY.

3rd.—One of the unpinioned Gannets on my ponds escaped in a high wind, and as all inquiries failed to learn its whereabouts, there can be little doubt that it succeeded in reaching the sea.

4th.—Hoopoe seen at Lammas by Mr. Walter Rye.

8th.—S.W. A handsome Pied Flycatcher† in the garden at Northrepps; and another Spoonbill on Breydon Broad, where on the following day it was seen by Mr. Jary to have been joined by a mate.

11th.—One of the Spoonbills seen by Mr. Farman as high up the River Waveney as Haddiscoe, where fortunately no one was tempted to break the law by shooting it. Sketches of it in various attitudes were taken by Mr. Patterson, and exhibited at a meeting of the Norwich Naturalists' Society.

13th.—My nephew tells me of there again being an Oystercatcher's nest with four eggs at Blakeney, the site chosen being within forty yards of the nest examined last year by the Duchess of Bedford, and no doubt the property of the same pair of birds. In the absence of the watcher the eggs were taken (D.U.), but the depredator was found out, prosecuted, and fined. The photograph of the eggs had been done by Mr. Edward Corder before this happened, but I doubt their being in the position in which the Oystercatcher left them. (See illustration on opposite page.)

15th.—A large "trip" of thirty Dotterel on the grass-lands indicated to Mr. Pashley the usual passage of these handsome spring Plovers, and a day or two afterwards Mr. Dack saw another on Kelling Heath, besides which a "trip" of ten were seen near Yarmouth (E. Saunders).

25th.—A Gannet taken in a Mackerel-net at sea, and brought by the captor to Mr. Patterson, is in the adult plumage except for the two middle tail-feathers, which are black, and there is also a little black on the posterior secondaries. Eye white, and round the eye the usual circle of blue skin. Placed on my pond this bird remained there in excellent health for seven months, and then died from a slightly salt Herring given when no fresh fish was obtainable.

JUNE.

4th.—W. A Spoonbill on Breydon Broad which had no crest was joined on the 6th by another, and the pair, which both Mr. Patterson and Mr. Jary described as very young ones, remained until the 18th. If they were birds of this summer they were uncommonly early ones.

9th.—*Utility of the Barn-Owl.*—Climbed to a Barn-Owl's nest in a pollard-oak; contents of the nest five young Owls (as usual of very different ages), two eggs (but these may have been rotten ones), a young rat, three or four fresh mice, and some



OYSTERCATCHER'S NEST AND EGGS.

pellets. No luminosity visible in the hollow, nor any game or feathers of any birds. What a pity it is that so many good gamekeepers will not allow themselves to be convinced by their own senses that the Barn-Owl is a friend! If this bird caught its food by day instead of by night they would have ocular demonstration of its utility. I have known a single keeper to destroy fourteen of these useful birds under the impression that he was doing his master a good service! One of my Barn-Owl's trees, a noble elm, was blown down this winter, giving me another

good opportunity for observations. In addition to the pellets in a tub put up for Owls, its hollow trunk contained a congeries of remains which, when I saw them, I directed my man to collect and soak in water, that we might have still more evidence wherewith to refute the gamekeepers. After throwing away the fur and all the lesser bones there remained over one hundred and twenty skulls, which consisted of eighty-six Long- and Short-tailed Field-Mice, twenty-six Rats (some of them very small), nineteen Shrew-Mice, and the skulls of two birds which appeared to belong to a Sparrow and a very small chicken. After they were thrown away I regretted I had not had them all photographed spread out on a board.

13th.—A Reeve's nest with four eggs on the Broads, of which Miss Turner has already published an excellent account in 'British Birds,' p. 66.

21st.—N.W. A very good adult Spoonbill, probably a new arrival, on Breydon Broad, but, though protected, it only stayed two days (Jary).

23rd.—Caught an old hen Hawfinch and four young ones under our pea-net, implying a nest not far off, which may have been the case, as we also saw two here in April, and later in June three more came.

25th.—Hawfinches taking peas badly at Westwick (M. C. Bird). A Grasshopper-Warbler's nest with eggs near Fakenham (Q. E. Gurney).

27th.—A fairly good number of Bearded Tits reported to be breeding on the Broads (Miss Turner). A young Redshank† hatched in an incubator by Mr. H. Wormald is now eight weeks old.

JULY.

6th.—A Quail's nest with nine eggst in it mown over by hay-makers at Ingham (R. Gurney). At Haddiscoe a pair of Blackbirds developed a mania for nest-building, completing, I am informed by Mr. L. C. Farman, twelve nests but laying no eggs. One nest which they built on the top of a paled gate was taken possession of by a pair of Pied Wagtails. The Blackbirds finished off their operations with a twin nest of two cups joined together, after which the female broke her wing against a wire linen-line (Farman). There was not a single Heron's nest at

Earlham, and no Black-headed Gulls' nests at Hoveton Broad this summer, as I learn from Mr. Barclay they have moved to Alderfen, more to their liking, and a few miles off.

16th.—Chiffchaff in full song still at Twyford, and Chiffchaffs and Willow-Warblers were heard there at intervals throughout the autumn (C. Hamond).

AUGUST.

5th.—W. A Spoonbill on Breydon (Jary), but it had gone next day, and no more were seen this year.

8th.—Young Cuckoo being fed by Willow-Warblers at Brunstead (Bird). Both ours at Keswick were this year in Wagtails' nests,† one nestling being about five days in advance of the other.

19th.—Gadwall (immature) at Potter Heigham (W. Lowne), not likely to have been bred there.

26th.—An Osprey seen at Smallburgh (M. Bird), and two days afterwards the same or another seen on the Broads by Miss Turner.

SEPTEMBER.

5th.—S.W. 4. It was not until September that the coast migration proper set in. I was in Scotland, but several rare birds seem to have been passing. As stated by Dr. F. G. Penrose in 'British Birds,' a Yellow-breasted Bunting† was shot near Wells by a son of one of the Earl of Leicester's gamewatchers; the wind the preceding evening had been S. 4, but in the morning N.W. 3. Russia is the country it would be expected to have come from, but it goes as far as Syria, according to authors. I am indebted to Mr. A. Napier for a sight of this Bunting, which is to be added to Lord Leicester's collection.

11th.—N.E. 2. Mr. E. C. Arnold, who was staying on the coast, saw a Red-breasted Flycatcher, but adds that it was not identified with certainty. It is probably an annual visitor to our coast, though overlooked until of late years.

18th.—S.W. variable to N.E., 1. Seven Grey Geese seen by Mr. Arnold in Blakeney Estuary, where a day or two afterwards I heard of a Long-tailed Duck, a female Eider Duck, and two young Gannets.

26th.—Ring-Ouzel at Northrepps, where my gardener says it remained three days close to a large elder-bush, which I believe

they visit for the berries every year (*cf.* Zool. 1903, p. 134). Several others seen along our coast about this time, as well as by Mr. Caton Haigh in Lincolnshire.

OCTOBER.

9th.—S.E. 4 (rising in the evening). October was on the whole a fine month, with winds light in force except for the gale on the 9th and 10th. It must have been impelled by this wind that a young Purple Heron† crossed the sea, and, attracted by the lights of Lowestoft, settled in the populous suburb of Kirkley, where it was made captive by a tram-conductor, and taken to the house of Mr. H. Bunn, one of whose customers kept it alive for six weeks, and it was then killed and stuffed. It is in the red plumage which led to its being mistaken at first for a Bittern.

10th.—S.S.E. 6. News was brought to Mr. Pashley by those who had been down to the shore that the bushes of scrubby saltwort along the coast were full of the usual small migrants, and at least one observer identified a Black Redstart. Perhaps there was a movement of Black Redstarts on the Continent, for between this date and the 26th Mr. Pashley knew for certain of eight of these birds coming to his portion of the coast, and Mr. Lowne, of Yarmouth, had another, which indicates rather a strong movement for the East Coast. On the evening of the 9th the wind was S.E. 6, which it continued to be throughout the 10th, rising to a high gale, force 7, in the evening. The first Bluethroat was seen yesterday.

11th.—[On the night of the 11th a great migratory movement must have been in progress on the north coast of Denmark, no fewer than a thousand birds being taken at the Skaw Lighthouse (*cf.* 'Field' of Nov. 2nd, 1907). No list of the species has yet been published, but Mr. Winge, of Copenhagen, writes me that there was neither a Black Redstart nor a Richard's Pipit among them. The wind at the Skaw was W.S.W. 4, but in the morning it had been E.]

12th.—During the recent S.E. gale a little flock of Richard's Pipits would seem to have been blown to the coast of Norfolk. On the 12th, the day that the first was seen, the Rev. M. C. Bird speaks of "trips" of Larks passing, and both they and the

Pipits may have come from the north of Denmark, and been part of the passage which was observed there, but in that case they were not flying with the wind. The first one† was brought to Mr. Pashley's house on the 12th (S.W. 4), and another‡ during the high wind on the 14th (S. 6); these two were ascertained by Mr. Pashley to be male and female, and I should say one was in active moult, the other through it. On Nov. 15th, wind W. 2, another was identified in the same locality on or near the shore, and on the 21st another [on which day one was also taken in Co. Dublin (*ante*, p. 32), the first for Ireland]. Their loud call-note in the air sometimes betrays their presence, even when the bird itself is still far away, as Gätke remarks, and the same has been observed in England. In Heligoland fifty can be sometimes seen in a day ('Birds of Heligoland,' p. 348).

17th.—[*Eagle at Sea*.—Capt. Allenby informs me that a Spotted Eagle, apparently dazzled by the lights on board ship, alighted on the deck of one of the Cruiser Squadron in lat. 54° N. long. 3° E., the wind being S., force 3, and being captured was subsequently forwarded to the Zoological Gardens, where its identity as *Aquila maculata* was ascertained. Capt. Allenby adds that a large number of other migratory birds were seen in the North Sea about that time, the distance from the coast of Norfolk being about one hundred and forty miles. It would have been interesting to have ascertained what they were. Up to 1895 the Spotted Eagle had been obtained in Heligoland twice ('Birds of Heligoland,' p. 179), but it has never paid us a visit nearer than Southwold.]

19th.—Mr. Pashley hears that there are a number of Gannets off the coast, both young and old; no piebald ones have been noticed. Pomatorhine Skua brought in by a "lugger" (Patterson).

22nd.—S.W. 3. A Richard's Pipit taken by a birdcatcher on Yarmouth denes, being taken to Mr. Lowne, at once began to feed on mealworms offered to it. Mr. Lowne describes it as being not yet through its moult, stumps of feathers showing on the sides and head.

23rd.—S.W. 1. Many strings of Gulls going west at Overstrand. Two Velvet Scoters in Blakeney Estuary.

24th.—Weighed a young Gannet at Mr. Pashley's house

(5½ lb.), but this is a good deal less than two I weighed last year.

29th. — S.E. 5. A Yellow-browed Warbler shot at Cley (H. Pashley); the other Norfolk example was obtained on Oct. 1st, 1894. The following day (S.S.E. 4) a Red-breasted Flycatcher was identified, and a Spotted Crake occurred at Wiveton (Pashley), not a common bird at any time.

31st.—S.W. 2. The Desert-Wheatear is a bird which we have been expecting for some time, but it does not appear to have been identified in Norfolk or Suffolk until to-day, when I am informed of one being shot near the sea. This is a large example,† a male bird, and apparently an old one from its plumage, measuring, after it was stuffed, 6·3 in. from tip of tail to tip of beak; throat richly mottled with black, on the back a delicate buff tint. This is only the second occurrence of the Desert-Wheatear in England. The first one, obtained in Yorkshire in October, 1885, was a young female, not so large a bird as the present example; it has appeared oftener in Scotland and Heligoland. On the same day a male Fire-crested Wren, which had quite lost its way, was caught in the town of Yarmouth and taken to Mr. J. E. Knights, to whom I am indebted for a painting of it; so possibly the two birds came over in company. The wind the day before had been S. 4, from which quarter it had been blowing strong since the 28th.

NOVEMBER.

3rd.—A Great Grey Shrike at Yarmouth (Patterson), and about this time (D. U.) the same or another was seen at Westacre by Mr. Birkbeck.

7th.—A Gadwall shot on Hoveton Broad by Mr. Barclay, and the following month another on Hickling Broad (Bird). Their presence on the eastern side of the county was until recently quite exceptional.

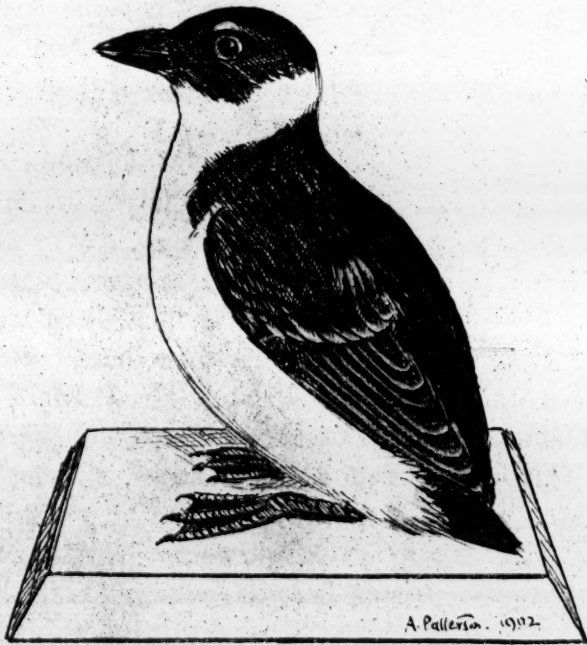
14th.—Ninety-six Scoter Ducks shot to wooden decoys off Hunstanton ('Eastern Daily Press'), where this form of sport is in great request, but such a large bag is unusual. The following day seventy-eight more were killed.

16th.—Mr. Farman saw a Waxwing—the only one, I think,

reported this year—feeding on haws at Haddiscoe Dam. Last year only one was noted, and I think one the year before.

17th. — Over five hundred Pochards on Hickling Broad (Bird).

19th.—That Barn-Owls are erratic in their time of breeding is well known, and therefore it was not surprising to find that an old elm-tree at Keswick contained young ones. Not many weeks after they had flown the bough snapped off, when it was found to be hollow for fifteen feet, the aperture being packed from end



LITTLE AUK (*Mergulus alle*).

to end with old Jackdaws' and Owls' nests. It was also during this month (D.V.) that a young Barn-Owl was brought to Mr. Gunn, with a message that the hole it came from contained three dead nestlings.

22nd.—A White-fronted Goose shot at East Ruston (M. Bird), and two days before one was brought down at Morston.

26th.—A late Whimbrel still at Wells (P. Hamond).

28th.—S.W. 4. A Nutcracker seen at Gunton, near Lowestoft,

and again on the 30th, when it was very exhausted (E. Fowler), and probably did not survive very long.

DECEMBER.

1st.—*The Luminous Owl*.—The luminous Barn-Owl, which, except for one appearance to Mr. Spencer in October, had not been seen since February, was again observed by Mr. R. J. Purdy, his son, and other persons, shining brightly in the same locality as before.

15th.—Mr. Dye, in recording a Little Auk (*ante*, p. 114), expresses an opinion that there is no figure of this bird which shows a complete white occipital line. I have not seen his bird, but I give a drawing by Mr. Patterson of a Little Auk taken at Yarmouth six years ago, which shows this character very strongly. (See illustration on p. 133.)

22nd.—Again the luminous Owl showed itself to Mr. Purdy, and between this date and the 29th it was seen by several people, and by many others subsequently. On the 29th its luminosity appears to have been at its maximum, the branches of trees being even lighted up as it flew amongst them. It was presently joined by a companion, also luminous, but not so bright as its mate, and I am assured by Mr. Purdy that on different occasions one or other of them was seen in six contiguous parishes. The nightly rounds of a Barn-Owl, which are often much the same in line of flight, would not be expected to extend further than that under any circumstances. The light is described by those who saw it best as pale yellow with a reddish tinge; at its brightest it was about as brilliant as the light of a bicycle lamp some three or four hundred yards away, and that was what Mr. Purdy at first mistook it for. Anyhow, the light does not seem to have had the effect of giving warning to Rats and Mice, for Mr. Hamond's bailiff saw it drop on one, and heard the little animal shriek. On one occasion the shining bird was quietly seated on a gate, and another time on the ground, having probably just dropped in pursuit of a Mouse. Those who saw it best agree that it was much brighter when coming towards the observer, and especially when rising in the air, but so much did the light pale as it flew away in the contrary direction that it is certain that little, if any, of the glow proceeded

from the back of the bird. I tried my best, in Mr. Hamond's company, to see this ornithological phenomenon, but with no success; though we were rewarded by a gentleman resident in the parish showing us a luminous tree. It was the stump of an ash which, when he found it, had a phosphorescent superficies of several feet on the decayed side, but the glow was not very bright, and there certainly was no hole which could have held an Owl.

25th. — Another luminous Barn-Owl seen in Haddiscoe marshes by Mr. L. C. Farman, an observer not likely to be mistaken, flitting across the marshes near Haddiscoe Dam at about six paces from the ground. It showed very bright at times, and then frequently vanished, no doubt as its breast and head turned away from the observer; but soon it was seen to appear again in the distance, sometimes showing up exceedingly bright. On two subsequent nights Mr. Farman had opportunities of watching it, and one or two other persons also saw it. As Haddiscoe is thirty miles from where the other luminous pair were seen, it could not have been one of them, though the same causes, whatever they were, may have operated to produce it.

27th.—A flock of five White-eyed Pochards reported to Mr. Bird to be on Hickling Broad, and about the same time a Gadwall and some Wild Swans. Mr. Bird does not say that any of the Pochards were shot, so that their identity is hardly established.

VARIETIES OF PLUMAGE.

January 11th.—Cream-coloured Fieldfare seen at Smallburgh (Bird). 14th. Reported melanism of the Water-Rail at Horsey Broad [for a similar instance, in Hampshire, *cf.* Zool. 1891, p. 67]. 31st. Cinnamon Redwing at Gorleston (E. C. Saunders), and another at Cromer (Pashley).

February 1st.—Pied Blackbird† at Mr. Roberts's, and a few days afterwards a silver-grey one at Martham, as I am informed by Mr. Saunders. 18th. Mr. Saunders received a Blackbird† which exhibited a narrow transverse bar, or "hunger trace" as I believe this appearance is sometimes termed, on nearly every feather of the body, but especially on the tail.

June 1st.—At the beginning of June (D. U.) Mr. H. Wormald saw one of the brown race of Partridges (*Perdix montana*) in a field near Dereham, which he believes it had been frequenting

since Christmas, and not far from where a good unrecorded example† of the same erythrism was shot by Mr. McLean in the autumn of 1906. It is twelve years since this spangled variety (which is figured in 'The Zoologist' for 1900, pl. ii.) first appeared in Norfolk, and if so many had not been shot there would have been a chance of perpetuating a very handsome addition to the English sportsman's bag.

September 1st.—A beautiful variety of the Lesser Tern,† nearly white and apparently adult, shot somewhere between Wells and Cromer, was received by Mr. Pashley, who was told that it had been seen about for some weeks. The primary quills are distinctly tinted with brown, and the dark occiput is quite apparent on close examination. On the same day another variety, also much too remarkable to be allowed to live, was shot at Brancaster, a sight of which I owe to Mr. Pashley, *viz.* a white or rather much pied Ringed Plover,† its plumage chequered with pale brown in patches—not such a striking albinism as the one shot in 1886.

October 23rd.—A white Dabchick† shot in Blakeney Channel, and subsequently disposed of to Mr. Connop, who was good enough to show me this albino in the flesh, whilst its legs still retained a bright lemon hue, the eyes, now somewhat sunken, being apparently pale brown. As none of the shooters had seen it about the harbour they believed that it had only just come over.

THE BIRDS OF THE DISTRICT OF STAINES.

BY GRAHAM W. KERR.

It is two years ago since I wrote in 'The Zoologist' under the above heading, and although during this time I have removed from Staines to Datchet, the distance is only a matter of eight miles, and has made no difference to the ground I work over; so that I shall continue to use the same title for these further notes.

During the two years fifteen new birds have been added to the local list, bringing the total to one hundred and twenty-six.

The reservoirs at Staines attract an ever-increasing number of birds, and from an ornithological point of view are well worth a visit at any time of the year, while during severe weather in winter the number of fowl on the waters is quite remarkable; but it is difficult to make accurate observations of them on so large a piece of water.

The breeding of the Pochard in Berkshire and of the Marsh-Warbler in Surrey are the two chief items I have to record.

RING-OUZEL (*Turdus torquatus*).—A fine bird seen in a meadow near Stanwell, April 1st, 1907.

CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus rufus*).—Is locally distributed; most plentiful in Windsor Park, but nowhere as common as the Willow-Wren.

WOOD-WREN (*P. sibilatrix*).—After my last notes in 'The Zoologist,' Mr. A. Holte Macpherson kindly wrote to tell me that he had found this bird very common on the east side of Windsor Park.

MARSH-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus palustris*).—This is a bird I had long hoped to meet in the district, and I was therefore extremely pleased when on June 14th, 1907, I found a nest with four eggs in an osier-plantation in the parish of Thorpe, Surrey. This is the first known instance of the bird breeding in the

county. I was examining a small densely overgrown osier-plantation fronting on to the Thames; the plantation had not been cleared for several years, and the undergrowth was exceedingly thick. There were several Reed- and Sedge-Warbler's nests, one of the former containing two eggs and one Cuckoo's. Some twenty yards back from the river I flushed a bird from a nest which after some searching I found placed low down in the fork of a small osier-bush almost completely covered with a mass of tall grasses and nettles. In the nest were four splendidly marked eggs of the Marsh-Warbler. The bird was very shy, and although I waited for a long time I could get no good view of it, though all the time it was hopping about near by in the undergrowth. On June 25th I again visited the plantation, and found another nest placed two or three feet from the ground in a thick clump of tall grass, three or four stems of which were woven into the sides of the nest, which again held four finely marked eggs. Once more I had great difficulty in getting even a glimpse of the bird. I wrote to Mr. L. B. Mouritz, who is interested in Surrey ornithology, and together we visited the spot on July 13th. The result was disappointing, as we found the nest empty, and could see no sign of the birds; nor was I any more successful on two subsequent visits. The chances of the birds returning to the plantation are, I am sorry to say, not very bright, for the area is very small and has been partially cleared for the erection of bungalows. A mile or so distant there is another dense and much more secluded osier-bed, and I expect that it will be here, if anywhere, that I shall meet the birds this spring.

BRAMBLING (*Fringilla montifringilla*).—Mr. E. Pettitt, a keen and capable ornithologist, writes me that he saw two birds near the Staines Reservoirs on Jan. 12th, 1908, and later in the month one bird near the same spot.

HOODED CROW (*Corvus cornix*).—On Oct. 28th, 1905, I saw one feeding with Rooks and Jackdaws in a newly ploughed field at Datchet. On Jan. 27th, 1907, I saw one standing on the ice at Virginia Water, trying to dig out some prey that was frozen into the ice, which was not very strong. I spent the morning of March 3rd at Virginia Water, and saw several of the birds. I did not see more than one at a time, so it may have been the

same bird, but I am strongly of the opinion that there was a small party of them. It is probable that in some years small parties winter in the Park, though this year I have not been able to locate them.

COMMON SHELD-DRAKE (*Tadorna cornuta*).—A flight of six were seen on the Staines Reservoirs in severe weather, Dec. 31st, 1906.

GOLDEN-EYE (*Clangula glaucion*).—On Dec. 29th, 1906, I found quite a number of Golden-eye on the Staines Reservoirs, and I think it may now be said to be a regular winter visitor, though not to be looked for until hard weather sets in. Christmas, 1906, was an old-fashioned one, with plenty of snow and frost. There were a great number of Duck on the reservoirs; several I knew to be strangers, but as I was unable to identify them with certainty they must be omitted from these notes. It is exceedingly difficult to make sure of birds on these reservoirs; usually they keep well out in the middle, and even with good glasses the distance is too great for accurate identification. The slightest breeze ruffles the water into a sea and increases the difficulties. This January the frost was severe enough to cover the waters with a thin coating of ice, and I had great hopes of seeing two or three new birds. When I arrived there early in the morning a fog prevented me seeing more than fifty or sixty yards; the sun was shining overhead, and looked as though it might break through at any moment. Occasionally a shaft of light would struggle through for a minute, and show the ice in the centre black with Duck sitting and standing about. I remained until evening, but had no luck, though out of the fog came a very medley of bird-calls. The next day I had a similar experience, and on the following day the weather became mild, with high wind and rain. It was bad luck to lose such a chance, especially after two very cold days of watching.

POCHARD (*Fuligula ferina*).—I cannot find that there is any record of the Pochard having bred in Berkshire, but I can now record that at least six pairs nested on a certain pond in Windsor Park last year (1907). I expected to find the Tufted Duck doing so at the same spot, but after much searching I failed to find any nest, though I think it very likely that I shall do so within the next few years.

(From my Note-book.)

May 5th, 1907.—On one of the ponds in Windsor Park one pair of Tufted Duck and six pair of Pochard still remain, and spring is now so far advanced that it is reasonable to suppose that both birds may breed here; whether it is possible to wade through the thick belt of reeds in order to make sure of this remains to be seen.

19th.—To-day Mr. Pettitt and I succeeded in wading out to one section of the reeds round the pond in Windsor Park. It was difficult work, but we were well rewarded in finding two nests of Pochard with eight and nine eggs; in the smaller clutch the young were just chipping through the shell, while the nine eggs appeared quite fresh. The eggs are somewhat larger and of a deeper colour than those of the Mallard. There were several male and female Pochard on the water, though not in company. We saw no Tufted Duck.

June 9th.—I do not know when I have spent a more uncomfortable morning. Mr. Pettitt and I waded right round the pond in Windsor Park. It was desperately hard work floundering about up to our waists in mud and water, the perspiration streamed down our faces, and swarms of midges, disturbed by our progress through the reeds, buzzed around our heads, while every step brought up great bubbles of foul-smelling gas. After four hours in the water we were heartily glad to get ashore again. The result of the morning's work was fifteen Reed-Warbler's nests, one with a young Cuckoo a few days old, and another with a Cuckoo's egg; three nests of Pochard with seven, seven, and eight eggs (tested in the water all these clutches showed signs of being much incubated). The other nests met with were Coot, Moorhen, Mallard, Great Crested Grebe, and Reed-Bunting.

Pettitt and I were both scared several times by some bird (?) that we could not get a glimpse of; right under our feet there would suddenly be a great commotion in the water, and something was rushing about and splashing below the surface. It happened to me first, and when I told Pettitt about it he laughingly said, "Mind you are not grabbed by a Crocodile." Later on the same thing happened to him, and he admitted that it was much too like the swirling of a Crocodile to be pleasant,

and, as he has had experience of Crocodiles on the West Coast of Africa, he knows something about them. We never decided what caused the commotion; it may have been large Pike we disturbed, but I fancy it was some bird, probably Great Crested Grebes. I remember disturbing a Coot from her nest once; she remained on the surface calling loudly, and wildly throwing the water about.

20th.—Paid another visit to the pond in Windsor Park, and found another nest of Pochard with eight eggs, and also saw a brood of six swimming on the water. We found a vast number of Reed-Warbler's nests, three of which contained Cuckoo's eggs, and under three other nests we saw fully-grown young Cuckoos that had fallen out of the nests and been drowned. This points to a heavy death-rate among them when the eggs are placed in nests over water. We again met with several "Crocodiles," but got no nearer to solving the mystery.

October 27th.—Some fifty Mallard, about twelve pairs of both Pochard and Tufted Duck, three or four Teal, and one Snipe were seen at the pond in Windsor Park to-day. Several Great Crested Grebe were swimming with half-grown young; they kept close company, and the young were uttering a squeaking cry which sounded from the distance like the twitter of some Finch. The curious striped markings of the young were clearly discernible. They must have been rather late broods. One Swallow was seen.

RINGED PLOVER (*Ægialitis hiaticola*).—Mr. L. B. Mouritz informs me that he saw a Ringed Plover at the Staines Reservoirs on Aug. 18th, 1907.

WOODCOCK (*Scolopax rusticula*).—One was shot at Wraysbury by Mr. W. Broughton, Sept. 29th, 1906.

COMMON REDSHANK (*Totanus calidris*).—Mr. Mouritz saw two at the Staines Reservoirs, July 18th, 1907.

BLACK TERN (*Hydrochelidon nigra*).—An immature bird flying over Virginia Water lake, Oct. 13th, 1907. (Another of Mr. Mouritz's notes.)

COMMON TERN (*Sterna fluviatilis*).—On May 12th, 1906, I saw a flock of quite a hundred Common Tern on the river at Old Windsor; they were beating up and down stream in search of fish, and many of them passed within a few yards of me. Time

after time they dived into the water and brought out fish the size of Bleak or small Roach, which they swallowed head first while still on the wing. The next day I could find no sign of the birds. It is not uncommon for one or two Terns to come up the Thames in the autumn, but I do not think I have any note of their occurrence in spring, and I have certainly never seen such a large flock.

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*).—There were not many birds on the waters when I visited the Staines Reservoirs on Oct. 13th, 1907, but a small Grebe at once attracted my attention, and there is no doubt that it was an Eared Grebe in winter plumage. It was very tame, swimming quite close in to the side and moving at a great pace. On Oct. 26th the Eared Grebe was still in the same corner of the reservoirs, and I watched it for a long while; the beak is curved slightly upwards, which I do not remember to have noticed with any other Grebe. After diving it came to the surface with a fish, and then brought one foot out of the water to help it get the fish into the right position for swallowing.

The most important of my other notes is perhaps the occurrence of the Great Northern Diver, being the third appearance of the bird since 1881. It seems curious that it should have so often visited such an inland district.

On Christmas Day, 1905, I visited the Staines Reservoirs, and almost immediately sighted a Great Northern Diver swimming at one hundred to one hundred and fifty yards from the side. The bird was not alarmed at my presence, and I watched it for a long time. It dived and came up with quite a large fish, which it swallowed; it also scratched its head with its foot, showing its under parts nicely. The next day the bird was further out, and I could not see it so well. On Jan. 1st, 1906, I had only just located the Diver when it rose and flew for some distance, passing quite close to where I was standing. The flight was high and powerful, the neck being stretched out in front and the legs behind. I did not see the bird after Jan. 28th; it then seemed to be quite at home, and to find plenty of fish. I tried to time the length of its dives, but was not very successful, as the bird pops up suddenly, and so far away from the spot it went down at that it is very hard to see it directly it comes up.

I see that in my last notes I described the Corn-Bunting as resident. This was a mistake; the bird is migratory, arriving early in April and remaining until about the end of September. I felt sure that it bred at Staines, though I have never found the nest. This year, after a whole morning's watching, I found a young bird just able to fly which was being fed by its parent.

Instances of birds sharing the same nest are uncommon, but I met with two cases last year. A Yellow Bunting I flushed from a small bush at the side of a ditch was sitting on two of her own eggs and two Whitethroat's. I think the nest was built by the Whitethroat, but could not be sure. Another similar case was a Reed-Warbler's nest built in nettles which held three Reed-Warbler's eggs and one Sedge-Warbler's. Four days later the Sedge-Warbler's egg had vanished, and the Reed-Warbler was sitting on her own three eggs. A Hedge-Sparrow built a nest in the head of a sprouting broccoli in the garden, but the wind blew the nest and eggs to the ground. A still more extraordinary Hedge-Sparrow's nest was built in an osier-bed, entirely suspended in giant nettles; the nettles were very dense and tall, and several stems were woven into the nest after the Reed-Warbler's style; yet the nest was undoubtedly built by the Hedge-Sparrow, and the bird was sitting on five eggs. I twice found two Cuckoo's eggs in the same nest, but I think my notes on the Cuckoo must be dealt with later on in an article to themselves.

The movements of the Stonechat in this district have been very peculiar. Formerly it was a local resident, and I regarded it as an increasing species. In 1906 I know that at least three families were reared, but that autumn the birds entirely disappeared, and none were seen for more than twelve months. In November, 1907, two were seen back in their old haunts, but since then they have again entirely left the neighbourhood. I happened to mention this to Mr. Mouritz, and he said that it was certainly curious, as he had a note that the Stonechat had not been seen in Richmond Park for over a year.

During the last two winters a flock of some fifty Black-headed Gulls have frequented the river and Eton Playing Fields; they may often be seen far away from the river, following the plough in company with Rooks and Jackdaws.

NOTES FROM LAKELAND, CUMBERLAND AND WESTMORLAND, 1905.

By T. C. PARKER.

THE following notes are derived largely from the Tullie House (Carlisle) Museum's Records, kept by Messrs. D. L. Thorpe and L. Hope, but whatever is placed in brackets thus [] has been collected from other sources.

The records were published in a local newspaper early in 1906, and may be of interest to readers of 'The Zoologist,' as, since the lamented death of the Rev. H. A. Macpherson in 1902, Lakeland has not had a regular correspondent to this Journal.

"The mild and open spring of 1905 was no doubt greatly responsible for the early arrival of many of our summer visitants, and the slight frosts in January and February were probably partly responsible for the presence of numbers of wildfowl on our inland waters during those months, inasmuch as these conditions have the effect of hastening or retarding migration, and when met by a retarding influence the birds will congregate in large numbers in suitable feeding places.

A remarkable assemblage of wildfowl was observed on Talkin Tarn during January, when it was estimated that there were not less than five hundred waterfowl belonging to seven different species, including a pair of Smews, a rare species of the *Anatidæ*, possessing a beautiful silvery-white plumage with black markings, and only recorded about twenty times or so previously for Lakeland; several Goosanders, four of them old males, with rich salmon-pink coloured breasts; some Golden-eyes, with the handsome black and white plumage of the adult male, and the sober brown and white of the female; Tufted Ducks, with their conspicuous white flank-feathers and erectile crest; several Mallards or common Wild Ducks; and lastly a large gathering of Ducks, which on close examination proved to be Pochards. These were roughly counted to two hundred and fifty birds,

which seems to be a record number for Lakeland, as the late Rev. H. A. Macpherson, in his 'Fauna,' says that he never saw or heard of a party of more than twenty in that area. Dr. Heysham considered it a scarce bird in his day.

The Grey Geese were again numerous on the Solway Marshes, and the Grey-Lag now appears to be the predominating species, although five or six years ago the Pink-footed Goose was by far the most plentiful species.

The Bernacle Geese lingered in the district until May 6th, when a flock of about fifty to sixty birds were seen on Rockcliffe Marsh."

[Macpherson, in his 'Fauna of Lakeland,' p. 251, says the Bernacle Geese generally leave the Solway in March and April, but sometimes a few linger into May.]

"One or two notable occurrences of rare birds have taken place, the one which more particularly came under our notice being the visitation of an Iceland Gull to the Eden. This species has only been recorded four times previously for Lakeland. The example mentioned spent several weeks during January and February about the junction of the River Caldew and River Eden, and was seen repeatedly during that time.

One of the most interesting occurrences in the ornithological annals of this county is the fact that a young Whooper Swan* (the larger of the two species of Wild Swans which visit this country) took up his quarters during the winter on the Eden, in association with the herd of Mute Swans belonging to the Corporation of Carlisle. On its arrival it was in immature dress of the first year, but assumed the white dress and yellow cere of maturity during its stay. It lived upon the most amiable terms with its tame relations, and whenever the herd was annoyed by dogs, or other trouble threatened, constituted itself their protector. Such an occurrence appears to be without parallel, and Prof. A. Newton says that the Mute Swan generally evinces hostility rather than friendship to his wild relations. As the time of migration drew near curiosity was felt as to how the Whooper would act—whether he would be content to remain in his comfortable quarters or to return to his Arctic home—and on May 12th we were grieved, but not surprised, to hear that the

* Cf. Zool. 1906, p. 193.

keeper had seen him fighting towards the Solway in company with two of his companions.

Several species of birds appear to be on the increase in the area covered by our notes. The Hawfinch has bred in Westmorland for several years past, and is steadily extending its range northwards. It has been observed at several different places in Cumberland during the past summer, and will probably soon become a well-known bird to the kitchen gardener, amongst whose pea-crop it plays havoc with its strong stout beak.

The Greater Spotted Woodpecker is becoming decidedly more numerous, a fact which should give dissatisfaction to no one, as the species feeds largely on insects and larvæ which are harmful to forest-trees. The Black Grouse appears to be on the increase in Westmorland, perhaps also in Cumberland, as also are the Lapwing,* Common Wild Duck, and several other less noteworthy species. On the other hand, one or two of our resident birds are alas! yearly becoming scarcer. In spite of its great adaptability, the Common Buzzard will soon become, like the Hen-Harrier and the Kite, a memory of the past. Where the Raven and Peregrine Falcon hold their own, the Buzzard, perhaps owing to her nest being more accessible, is becoming yearly less numerous." [Macpherson, in his 'Fauna,' mentions a nest of the Buzzard in Westmorland on a certain low face of rock, "which is so easy of access that even a child could reach it without incurring any risks, and yet the Buzzard has nested there on two occasions within the last decade." It is to be much regretted that these noble birds are not allowed to nest and rear their young in peace, and add further beauty to their surroundings.]

"The Starling is a model of adaptability and perseverance among the birds. Sixty years ago he was scarcely known amongst us; now he is everywhere, and, not satisfied with a normal nesting-time, actually makes a nest and hatches a brood of young in December.

An extremely early nest of the Dipper, locally known as the Water-Ouzel or Bessie Dooker [I have heard also Peggie White-throat] was recorded from Holme Head, the young birds being

* Their eggs are protected from April 15th to July 1st by a Cumberland County Council bye-law.

hatched about March 13th. The same pair of birds had another nest and eggs before the first brood had got well on to the wing."

The following are the chief notes of interest sent in during the past year :—

JANUARY, 1905.

1st.—Great Spotted Woodpecker seen at Salkeld (H. Britten). [Also on several other occasions during the month.] Great Northern Diver seen on Windermere (W. E. B. Dunlop).

18th.—Vast assemblage of waterfowl, including Pochards (about two hundred), Tufted Ducks, Golden-eye, Mallard, Coot, Goosander (four), and Smews (two), seen on Talkin Tarn (D. L. Thorpe and L. E. Hope).

21st.—A Red-breasted Merganser and Smews seen at Talkin Tarn (T. L. Johnston).

26th.—Iceland Gull in the dress of second or third year seen on the Willow Holme opposite Etterby Scaur (D. L. Thorpe).

28th.—Six Bewick Swans seen to alight on Skinburness Marsh (W. Nichol).

30th.—Mistle-Thrush in song at Great Salkeld (H. Britten).

FEBRUARY.

4th.—Iceland Gull again observed (D. L. Thorpe).

6th.—Chaffinch in song at Great Salkeld (H. Britten).

[7th.—Song-Thrush commenced to sing at Salkeld; also Wood-Pigeons and Stock-Doves heard cooing (H. Britten).]

10th.—Green Sandpiper seen, which had frequented Skinburness Marsh for two or three months (W. Nichol).

[11th.—A Jack-Snipe seen at Salkeld. This is the only occasion on which this bird has been seen during the present winter. This bird used to visit the area around Salkeld in numbers, arriving at the end of October or in early November, and leaving again in March; but on referring to my notes I find that this species has been visiting this part of the Eden Valley in gradually decreasing numbers for several years past. In 1904 its first appearance for the winter was Jan. 2nd, and a pair were seen on Feb. 26th near Lazonby Fell. These were the only occurrences during that year (H. Britten).]

13th.—Peewits mating at Nunwick, Great Salkeld (H. Britten).

16th.—Rooks building nests at Horsegills, Kirklington (T. W. Sharp).

23rd.—A Black-headed Gull at Stanwix assuming nuptial dress; head nearly all dark brown (L. E. Hope).

26th.—Hawfinch seen at Rickerby (W. H. Little).

[A large flock of Golden Plover have been seen on two different occasions during the present month near Great Salkeld. Flocks of these birds seldom visit this part of the county, and when they do never make a long stay, though usually plentiful nearer the Pennines. Macpherson says:—"Within the last days of February many parties of Golden Plover usually make their appearance in the fields in the neighbourhood of the English Solway. These immigrants, most of which are beginning to assume the black breast, only stay with us a few days, and then depart in an easterly direction." No doubt these are of the same flocks from the Solway, making their way gradually up to their moorland nesting haunts (H. Britten).]

[The Blackbird began to sing during the last few days of the month at Great Salkeld (H. Britten).]

MARCH.

13th.—Dipper's nest with four young hatched at Holme Head—a very early nest (R. Leighton). [Also cf. T. L. Johnston, Zool. 1905, p. 179.]

19th.—Ravens nesting; nest with eggs near Windermere (W. E. B. Dunlop).

24th.—Wheatear seen at Whinfell, Penrith; an early arrival (Charles Britten).

27th.—Sand-Martins seen at Langwathby (H. Britten).

29th.—Single Swallow seen at Windermere; an early arrival (A. E. Rawson).

APRIL.

2nd.—Sand-Martins flying over Siddick Ponds, Workington (C. J. Phillips). [Swallow seen at Salkeld. This bird, like the Sand-Martins, would be seen one day and then disappear for several days, while it was the 14th before these two species rightly came to stay (H. Britten).]

5th. — Ring-Ouzel arrived in Lake District, Windermere (W. E. B. Dunlop).

6th.—Heron near Carlisle have young (J. B. Cairns).

7th.—Swallows arrived at West Seaton, near Workington (C. J. Phillips). [An Oystercatcher in Salkeld district (H. Britten).]

9th.—Willow-Wren seen at Monkhill (B. Johnston).

11th.—Brood of young Woodcocks at Castletown (J. B. Cairns).

[12th.—Common Sandpiper seen at Nunwick (H. Britten).]

14th.—Cuckoo heard near Floriston (J. B. Cairns).

15th.—Male and female Pied Flycatchers seen at Wetheral (T. L. Johnston). Large numbers of Red-throated Divers on the Solway (W. Nichol).

17th.—Blackcap seen at Wetheral (W. H. Little). Redstart seen at Nunwick (H. Britten).

21st.—Hawfinch, Spotted Flycatcher, and Redstart seen at Newby Grange (E. Hodgson). Common Sandpiper at Linstock (W. H. Little).

24th.—Grasshopper-Warbler heard at Todhill's Moss, and a Starling's nest amongst the branches in a Scotch fir-tree (J. B. Cairns). Whinchat seen at Salkeld (H. Britten).

[25th.—Sedge-Warbler seen on banks of River Eden at Great Salkeld (H. Britten).]

29th.—Sedge-Warbler and Pied Flycatcher arrived at Windermere (W. E. B. Dunlop). Three Swifts at Loshville, Etterby Scaur (D. L. Thorpe). Spotted Flycatcher at Rickerby (W. H. Little).

[30th.—Cuckoo first heard near Salkeld (H. Britten).]

MAY.

1st.—Red Bank-Vole sent to Carlisle Museum from Nunwick (R. Heywood Thompson). [House-Martins arrived at Salkeld; a number seen hawking for insects over the river (H. Britten).]

3rd.—One or two Shoveler Ducks and Black-tailed Godwits seen on Salta Moss (R. Mann and R. Williamson).

4th.—Cuckoo and Sedge-Warbler at Holme Eden (W. H. Little). Cuckoo heard at Windermere (W. E. B. Dunlop).

5th.—Curlew's nest, one egg, found at Windermere (W. E. B. Dunlop).

6th.—Flock of fifty or sixty Bernacle Geese still on Rockliffe

Marsh (L. E. Hope). A Song-Thrush's nest, built in ivy, covered and protected by a leaf, which had been evidently intentionally introduced by the bird; Windermere (W. E. B. Dunlop).

7th.—Corn-Crake heard at Linstock (W. H. Little). Buzzard's nest with three eggs, Lake District (W. E. B. Dunlop).

[9th.—Whitethroat seen at Salkeld (H. Britten).]

[10th.—Swift and Spotted Flycatcher arrived at Nunwick (H. Britten).]

13th.—Seven Whimbrel seen on Rockliffe Marsh (R. Graham). Four Bernacle Geese seen on Rockliffe Marsh (T. L. Johnston). Peregrine's nest, three eggs, Lake District, Windermere (W. E. B. Dunlop).

[14th.—A pair of Pied Flycatchers observed carrying materials for their nest at Edenhall (H. Britten).]

[15th.—Corn-Crake first heard—very scarce so far—Great Salkeld (H. Britten).]

20th.—An instance reported of a Waterhen hatching her eggs after her nest had been bodily removed from its original site on Tarn Lodge (G. B. Routledge). [A pair of Blackcap Warblers on roadside near Edenhall. A bird rarely seen in this district (H. Britten).]

26th.—An instance of a Song-Thrush laying her eggs on the bare ground, under a bramble-bush, at Horsegills, Kirklington (T. W. Sharp).

(To be continued.)

NEWFOUNDLAND SEALING, 1907.

BY THOMAS SOUTHWELL, F.Z.S.

OWING to the lamented death of my valued correspondent, the late Sir Robert Thorburn, I had contemplated discontinuing these Newfoundland Notes, but such readers as have followed me hitherto may perhaps like to be furnished with the statistics for the season of 1907. I therefore send a summary of the results, for which I am mainly indebted to Mr. L. G. Chafe's Annual Circular.

The fleet of twenty-four vessels sailed as usual on Monday, March 11th, encountering terrible weather from the commencement. The 'Leopard,' which left St. John's on March 6th for Channel, which was to have been her port of departure, during a desperate snowstorm next day ran on the rocks near Renew's, and became a total wreck; happily her crew, after much suffering, effected a landing in safety. Later on the 'Greenland' with a broken shaft was driven seaward in a blizzard, leaking badly, and had to be abandoned one hundred and twenty-five miles E.S.E. of Bonavista, her crew being rescued by the other steamers. Thus the severity of the weather and the heaviness of the ice-pack combined to render the season, with the exception of 1905, the worst since 1898.

Deducting the two wrecked steamers, the remaining twenty-two vessels secured 245,051 pelts, being 96,785 less than in the previous year, the money value of which showed a decrease of £30,467. The first vessel to return was the 'Grand Lake,' on March 27th, with 10,739 Seals. The 'Neptune' headed the list with 30,985 Seals, only five vessels having above 15,000; seven others had above 10,000, and ten others below that number; the average of the twenty-two vessels was 11,139, ten vessels being above that number and twelve below it. Thus there were very few which made a paying voyage. Of the 245,051 Seals killed, 222,713 were young and 4490 old Harps, 14,869 Bedlamers, 2913 young and 66 old Hooded Seals. The market price for young pelts was 4.20 dols. and for old ones 3 dols. per cwt.

ON *ARMADILLIDIUM ALBUM*, DOLLFUS, A RARE
WOODLOUSE NEW TO THE FAUNA OF GREAT
BRITAIN.

By RICHARD S. BAGNALL, F.E.S.

IN a recent issue of 'The Zoologist' (1907, pp. 465-470), Mr. Bruce F. Cummings contributed an interesting paper on some Woodlice recently taken by himself in the neighbourhood of Barnstaple, and mentioned a small white species of *Armadillidium* which he was unable to identify. At my request Mr. Cummings kindly submitted examples to me, and I at once recognized them as being referable to *Armadillidium album*, described by M. Dollfus in 1887 as follows:—

ARMADILLIDIUM ALBUM, n. sp.*

Corpus valde convexum, crebre granulatum et minute hirsutum. Frons antice subrecta, medio nec depressa nec foveata. Oculi nigri, ocellis circiter 12. Epistoma scutello lineam frontalem vix superante eamque valde adpresso. Tubercula antennaria parva, rotundate quadrangula. Antennæ hirsutæ; flagelli articulus prior altero triplo vel quadruplo brevior. Segmentum caudale latius quam longius et fere semisirculum. Articulus basalis pedum caudalium magnus; ramus exterior parvus, multo brevior quam latior, ramus interior parvus, truncatus. Album, uniforme. Long. 6 millim., lat. $2\frac{3}{4}$ –3 millim. Plage d'Arcachon.

In the same publication M. Dollfus adds:—"18. *A. album*, A. D.—Plages de sable du Sud-Ouest, sous les pierres et les pièces de bois. Arcachon (Gaillard, A. D.), in coll. A. D."

In 1892 Dollfus published his "Tableaux Synoptiques de la Faune Française: Le Genre *Armadillidium*,"† a paper which should be in the hands of all naturalists interested in the

* "Diagnoses d'Espèces Nouvelles de la Tribu des Armadilliens" ('Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Scientifiques de Paris,' 1887, p. 4) (*separatum*).

† "Catalogue des Espèces Françaises de la Tribu des Armadilliens," *loc. cit.* p. 7 (*separatum*).

Terrestrial Isopod Crustacea. Figures are there given of the different species, and show at once how very distinct this creature is from all other European species of the genus. It will therefore be better to briefly mention a few of its chief characteristics rather than make difficult comparisons, as a comparison with another species always suggests—to me, at least—a closer affinity than is very often the case. The body is strongly convex, dull, and has the dorsal surface *closely granular and sparsely set with minute hairs*. The frontal cephalic lobe is low, narrowly extended and very broad, the side lobes being comparatively small. The antenna is short, covered with hairs, and has the last joint of the flagellum more than three times the length of the basal joint. The first segment of the mesosome does not extend laterally beyond the head. The last segment of the metasome is much broader than long, and has the extremity broadly rounded; the outer ramus, too, is much broader than long, and is *armed with a distinct tooth at the outer apical corner*, whilst the inner ramus is very short, comparatively broad, and truncate. The colour, according to Dollfus, is of a uniform white,* but one or two of Mr. Cummings's specimens have the segments of the mesosome partially shaded with grey.

I am told that a specimen of this species, taken by Mr. C. A. Briggs, of Tynmouth, was sent to Mr. A. M. Webb for identification, and returned as the common *A. vulgare*. If no mistake has been made in my information, I am compelled, with all due respect to Mr. Webb, to differ. In size, colour, character of dorsal surface, and structure the two species—*album* and *vulgare*—have absolutely no conceivable point in common which could lead to the one being mistaken for the other.

In his paper last cited, Dollfus writes:—"Cette petite espèce, si singulière, m'a été par M. Gaillard, qui l'avait reçue d'Arcachon, en Mars 1886, sans designation spéciale d'habitat. Au mois d'Octobre de la même année, j'en ai trouvé moi-même trois exemplaires, sur la plage d'Arcachon, sous une planche échouée devant Saint-Ferdinand; depuis et malgré des recherches répétées il m'a été impossible d'en retrouver un seul échantillon. Peut-être s'agit-il d'une espèce introduite et qui ne si sera pas acclimatée."

* 'Feuille des Jeunes Naturalistes,' ser. iii. 1892.

The English specimens, on the capture of which Mr. Cummings is to be congratulated, were taken on the sands under seaweed, &c., at the estuary of the Taw and Torridge, Devonshire, and the fact that they occurred in Devonshire (in which county we find the South European forms—*Philoscia couchii*, Kin., *Metoponorthus cingendus*, Kin., and *Armadillidium nasatum*, B.-L.), and in a precisely similar habitat as the French examples, goes to prove, I think, that *A. album* is an indigenous form, and not, as Dollfus suggests, a species probably introduced. A systematic search in the south-western counties of England, after a study of the distribution of species such as those just mentioned, will almost certainly bring further interesting Woodlice to light, and add considerably to our knowledge of the British Terrestrial Isopoda, in which group a large amount of work has already been achieved since the publication of Messrs. Webb and Sillem's 'British Woodlice' in 1906. So far as I am aware there are no further records of *A. album* to be noted.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

AVES.

Tits feeding on Maize.—On the 15th inst. I was watching three species of Tits—Blue, Great, and Cole—in Bingley Wood, all feeding greedily on maize, or at least the softer portions of the grain—perhaps the germs only. Their usual method was to take each grain into the nearest tree, and peck away until they secured the desired morsel, which process occupied but a few moments, after which they allowed the residue to fall to the ground, the rejected matter beneath the trees forming quite a litter for a considerable area. Formerly the Cole-Tit did not take to Indian corn so freely as the Blue Tit, the latter having been fond of this food ever since it was first largely used in feeding poultry and Pheasants; but at present, even in mild winter when other and more natural food is readily procurable, maize must constitute a by no means unimportant part in the bill of fare of three species of Titmice which frequent our woods in winter. Whilst watching the Titmice a Redbreast came within a few feet from where a gamekeeper's son and I were standing, and bolted several pieces of Indian corn. I thought I had seen it previously doing so when it was about fifteen yards distant, but was hardly prepared to believe this to be possible until it came close to us.—E. P. BUTTERFIELD (Bank House, Wilsden).

Rough-legged Buzzard in Hants.—A female of this grand winter visitor was killed a few miles from Ringwood on Feb. 8th, and I saw it soon after it was shot. It measured just over twenty-three inches in length, was forty-eight inches across its expanded wings, and weighed exactly three pounds. Though of course destitute of the Owl-like disk of feathers about the face, the *softness* of its plumage reminded one very forcibly of the *Strigidae* (even more than the plumage of the closer allied Harriers), and the form of the eyes, so enlarged in the socket behind the eyelid, increases the similarity, indicating, I suppose, that *Buteo lagopus* often seeks its prey far into the dusk. In the stomach I found what I think were the remains of a Rabbit, from the length and quantity of fur mixed therewith, but if

this supposition be correct, another rodent must have been its last meal anticipated, as in its throat the hind leg of a Rat was unmistakable. The toes and claws of the bird were very dirty, as if it had been "scratching," of which their robust form seemed quite capable, but the feathers of the legs were both long and graceful, of a buff colour streaked with dusky arrow-headed markings. The head was hoary, with small dark streaks, from each feather having a dark central area; the rest of the body was of various shades of dark brown, mottled here and there with whitish, the most conspicuous being a light patch in the middle of the breast. The eyes were brown. I heard of two other specimens in distant parts of the county, but let us hope their lives are still intact. I have but three previous records of the species in this immediate neighbourhood, so its occurrence is interesting to me.—G. B. CORBIN (Ringwood).

Honey-Buzzard in North Wales.—I have in my possession a fine male Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), which was shot at Abergele, North Wales, Oct. 15th, 1907.—CHARLES D. HEAD (2, Mount Vernon, Dollymount, Dublin).

Variety of Wigeon (*Mareca penelope*?).—On March 20th, whilst in Brighton, I saw exposed for sale in a fishmonger's shop a number of Wigeon. One bird in particular attracted my attention, as it had a *broad band of metallic green* running from the eye on each side of the head such as one sees in the Common Teal. Would this be the American Wigeon (*M. americana*)? I was in a great hurry at the time to catch a train, so could not stop to make inquiries as from whence the bird came. It was, however, in very poor condition, and had apparently been dead several days.—GORDON DALGLIESH (Brook, Witley, Surrey).

Notes from South-western Hants.—The past winter, although so keen for a time, was rather unproductive of rarities. A vast quantity of wildfowl frequented the river from time to time, but mostly of the ordinary kinds, the Wild Duck (*Anas boschas*), as usual, predominating, and on account of the changing weather most of the birds were very unsettled, shifting from place to place in a most remarkable and somewhat unusual manner. Wigeon and Teal were in considerable numbers, over one hundred of the latter having been killed at one "shoot," but generally they were not so abundant as they are some winters. Pochard and Tufted Duck appear to be increasing, the latter especially; as to the former, it was a comparatively common winter visitor many years ago, and well known to the sporting

community by the name of Red-headed Ker, or "Polka Duck," but for a considerable time it almost failed to visit this neighbourhood, some winters not one occurring, so I am glad to record its reappearance in some numbers. I cannot, however, do the same with regard to the Goosander or Red-breasted Merganser, which seem to have left us entirely—the latter was always the rarest—but last season there were at least two male Smews in fully adult plumage seen upon the water, one of which was shot, and no doubt they were accompanied by females and immature specimens. I also knew of three or four Gadwall, all immature except one—an old male in fine feather, but so badly mutilated as to be unfit for preservation. A few Shovelers and one or two Golden-eyes, all young birds, were also met with, and I heard of one Pintail, but did not see it. Several "skeins" of Wild Geese were seen, numbering from five to fifteen, but they were very wary, and did not frequent the vicinity of the river where most of the shooting took place, and I knew of only two being killed, although they were about the neighbourhood for several weeks. I saw the head and feet of one of the slaughtered, and it was of the Pink-footed species; whether all were of the same kind I know not. On previous occasions when any of the *Anseres* visited us it was generally the White-fronted (*A. albifrons*), although *A. brachyrhynchus* has been met with previously more than once. Two or three Bitterns frequented the reed-beds near the river, and one was killed at the end of February, but I am glad to say a more humane feeling seems to have sprung up towards this handsome bird, and if seen during a fusillade it is allowed to wing its lazy flight to some place of safety. Some time after the shooting had ceased (on March 1st) a man who often attends the Salmon fishers, and to whom a Bittern is not a stranger, brought me word that he had seen a bird or two on three occasions in the reed-beds, appearing "very tame," standing quietly amongst the "dead spear," with its neck straight and beak pointing upwards; and, he added, "I should have thought it was a Bittern, but it was not half the size of one—in fact, no larger, if as large, as a Peewit." Could this have been *Ardetta minuta*? The man's description was given in good faith; he had nothing to gain by it, and I think he was ignorant of such a bird as the Little Bittern, but the time of year seems a little out of place, as the few recorded specimens of this species in Hampshire were, I believe, in the summer or autumn months. Still, I could believe in its occurrence here in the second or third week of March much better than the reported notes of the Cuckoo in February, or even earlier in the year.

In connection with the notes (*ante*, pp. 33 and 73) respecting the occurrence of the American Wood Duck (*Æx sponsa*) in this country, I may mention that in November last I knew of a male of this very beautiful species having been killed not far from here, and on Feb. 13th a most superb specimen (male) of what I suppose is the Asiatic representative of this lovely group, *viz.* the Mandarin Duck (*Æx galerita*), with its bantam-like neck, blue and white crested head, beautifully barred and variegated body, feathers, and the large fan-like scapulars standing over its back, was killed a few miles away, and although I am not aware that either species is semi-domesticated upon any private water near here, I do not suppose they were "British" in the general acceptance of the term, and I should not have recorded their occurrence except in connection with the above-mentioned notes; and I suppose in such a catalogue of "escapes" should be chronicled a fine Canada Goose, shot during the winter or early spring. Of the smaller birds, Redwings and Bramblings were at times abundant, but Fieldfares, Siskins, and Lesser Redpolls do not visit this part of the county—the forest especially—in anything like the numbers they formerly did. Last autumn an unusual number of Kestrels were observed, and during the whole winter several Peregrine Falcons frequented the valley of the Avon, and, strange to say, I did not hear of a single specimen of this noble bird being shot, although on several occasions information was brought to me of a "swoop" amongst a flock of Teal, or, singling out a Peewit from its companions, the Falcon made short work of the screaming Plover. One or more of the Hen-Harriers were seen from time to time, both in meadow and field, and, if taking toll of a crippled bird, kept well out of shot itself, and so, let us hope, escaped. The Merlin, as usual, appeared in limited numbers, but I did not hear of one being killed.

At the end of January a fine female Badger weighing twenty-five pounds was trapped on an estate on the western side of the river where the existence of such an animal was entirely repudiated by the gamekeepers, whose experience and knowledge of all wild creatures—according to their own estimation—were beyond dispute; but from the appearance I should say she was not a solitary representative of her kind in the locality where she was found. I knew of four Otters, weighing respectively sixteen, eighteen, twenty-two, and twenty-four pounds, which were either trapped or shot, and several seen within a radius of a few miles, during the first three months of the year, and most probably there were others of which I have no record; but their destruction needs little comment when one sees advertisements for

the skins, offering good prices, in almost every local newspaper, and thus the poor Otter has to die because it wears a fur undercoat, and this same is considered an important and aristocratic decoration for the neck and wrists of his arch-enemy, man!

I understand an unusual number of Salmon have been netted in "the run" at the outflow of the river, and on account of the flooded condition of the stream during the winter a considerable quantity of fish were able to ascend for spawning purposes, as testified by the number of "kelts" that take the fly, but of course are returned to the water; yet a good number of "clean-run" fish—nearly thirty I have heard—have been taken within a few miles with rod and line, several of them scaling over thirty pounds each—one of thirty-nine pounds—and if the river was as clean and suitable as formerly a good hatching should be the result; but I hear that desirable condition is not attainable, and I suppose the natural enemies of the young fry are rather increased than otherwise in the increasing numbers of the Chub, which is not spoken of very favourably in some quarters.—G. B. CORBIN (Ringwood).

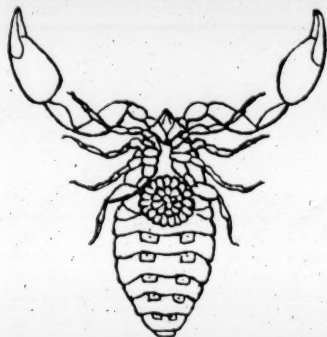
AMPHIBIA.

Common Newt (*Molge vulgaris*) in Carnarvonshire.—Up to the time when my 'Vertebrate Fauna of North Wales' went to press I had no actual evidence of the occurrence of the Common Newt in Carnarvonshire or Anglesey, although both the other species are common there. Last summer, however, Mr. D. Witty, of Colwyn Bay, sent me an adult male *Molge vulgaris* which he had taken along with others from a small pond on the Little Orme's Head. The neighbouring ponds contained none of this species, but numbers of Palmated and Great Warty Newts.—H. E. FORREST (Hillside, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury).

ARACHNIDA.

Curious Habits of Chelifers.—With regard to the Editor's note in 'The Zoologist' (*ante*, p. 77) on the occurrence of a species of *Chelifer* on the wings of a Longicorn beetle in Natal, and his further reference to a similar record from Kilimanjaro, it may be of interest to add an instance from Ceylon. I have on more than one occasion taken *Chelifers* (in one instance as many as seven) from beneath the elytra of one of our largest Longicorn beetles. *Chelifers*—probably of several species—are quite common under the loose bark of various trees in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Peradeniya. They construct small circular retreats of fine silky web. On prizing

off a large piece of loose bark groups of twenty or more of these small nests may be revealed, each containing a single occupant. The eggs of the *Chelififer* are carried at the base of the abdomen, on the under surface, and are arranged in a regular rosette-shaped mass (see fig.). The stems of our trees are frequented by gangs of the large and ferocious ant (*Ecophylla smaragdina*). Occasionally one of these ants may be found struggling vainly to extricate its foot



from some crevice in the bark. Investigation will show that the foot is firmly held in the chela of a small *Chelififer* safely ensconced beneath the bark. And there it may be held day after day until it dies of starvation. I have found the ants hanging dead still in the grasp of their captor. I do not think that the *Chelififer* has any special purpose in the capture.

I have never seen one feeding upon the ant. The probability is that the little animal instinctively grasps the intruding foot, and holds on pertinaciously as long as it feels any resistance.—E. ERNEST GREEN (Peradeniya, Ceylon).

OBITUARY.

JOHN THOMAS CARRINGTON.

MANY will regret to learn that this naturalist—for he was more than an entomologist—passed away on March 5th last at the age of sixty-two. Mr. Carrington was born on March 21st, 1846, and originally studied for the medical profession, but after travelling in America and Africa he may be said to have almost settled down to journalism as a profession. He edited the 'Entomologist' for some years after the death of Edward Newman, and until a change took place in the proprietorship of that magazine. His editorship was marked by tact and discretion, for apart from the knowledge of his subject he possessed broad views, and was actuated by a genial disposition. For many years he was on the editorial staff of the 'Field,' and also, in 1893, became proprietor of 'Science Gossip,' which he edited until that journal predeceased him in 1902. He was of a kindly and pleasant nature, and did much good work in his own way for the cause he had at heart.

